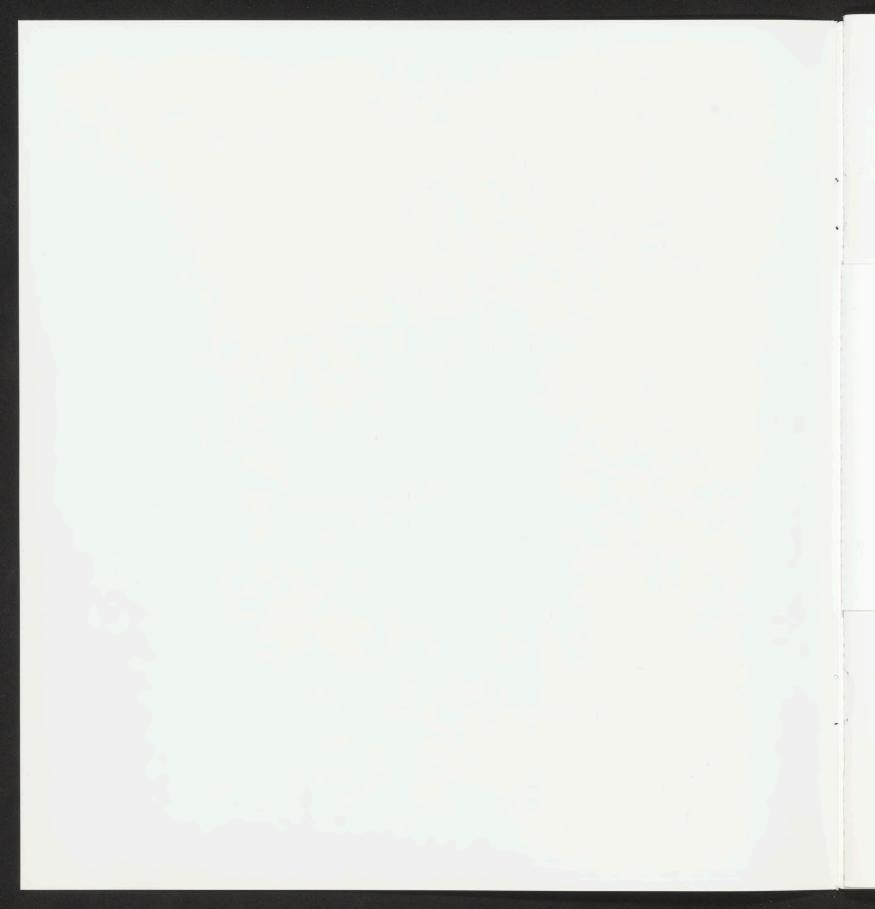
# ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

The Early 1950s



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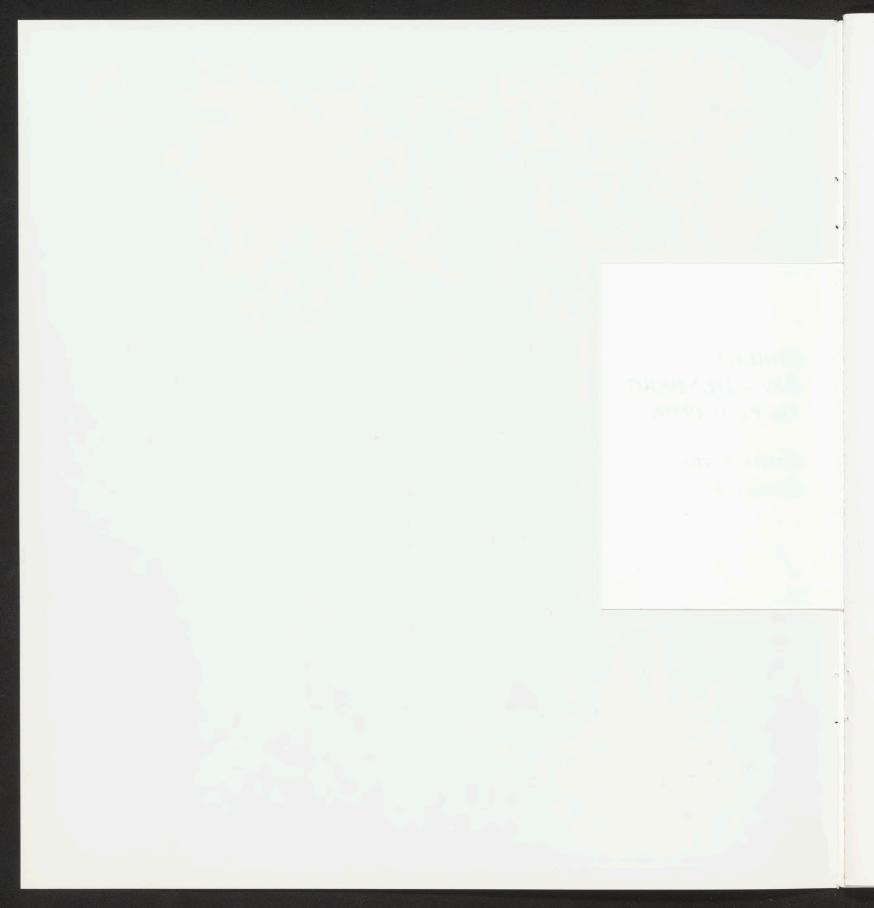
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An Exhibition Organized by

THE MENIL COLLECTION

THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

Washington, D.C.



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This publication accompanies the exhibition "Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s," organized by The Menil Collection and curated by Walter Hopps.

The exhibition has been supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

The forthcoming monograph Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s has been supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

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## Lenders to the Exhibition

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## Acknowledgments

In looking at the works of art presented in this survey of Robert Rauschenberg's early period from 1949–1953, one begins to understand how seminal these pieces were in developing new ways of making art. In addition to their sheer beauty, a sense of what Rauschenberg has called "the exhilaration of the idea of invention" is evoked by each work. The breadth of his invention is truly remarkable and is manifested in an extraordinarily diverse use of materials and processes. This exhibition provides the occasion for a new understanding and appreciation of Rauschenberg's significant and heretofore neglected early achievements.

In 1984 Walter Hopps initiated this exhibition project with the acquisition of Rauschenberg's *Crucifixion and Reflection*, 1950, for The Menil Collection. He is responsible for every aspect of the exhibition and a forthcoming comprehensive monograph. Both are germane to The Menil Collection's endeavors to explore the art of the masters of this century through extended single-artist exhibitions.

Generous support for this exhibition has been received from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts has provided funding for a comprehensive monograph documenting Robert Rauschenberg's work prior to 1954, which is scheduled for publication in the fall of 1991.

I wish to thank those who have joined with us to present "Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s," which include Kevin Consey, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and Jack Lane, director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

We are pleased that David C. Levy, in his new post as president and director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, embraced the inaugural presentation of this exhibition.

> Paul Winkler The Menil Collection

In the mid 1970s I had the opportunity of introducing to the Smithsonian Institution the idea that Robert Rauschenberg, as one of the country's greatest living artists, would be the ideal choice to honor on the occasion of America's bicentennial. This acknowledgment took the form of a full-scale retrospective, which I organized with my colleague Neil Printz at the National Collection of Fine Arts and which toured to a number of major American museums. More than 200 works in every conceivable media were catalogued and presented, comprising the most comprehensive review of the artist's achievements to that date.

In the course of organizing this retrospective, it became apparent to Printz and myself that Rauschenberg's critical and germinal work done prior to 1954 (the advent of his celebrated combines and three-dimensional assemblages) had been rarely seen and was generally misinterpreted. The pervasive notion that only a small amount of such work was ever produced and that most of it had been destroyed or lost was not true. Furthermore, we realized that the complexity, richness, and qual-

ity of this early work were truly extraordinary.

Extreme limitations of existing documentation, a lack of research time, and space priorities for the balance of the retrospective limited the number of pre-1954 works included in the 1976 exhibition to approximately thirty-five. Even though many early works were exhibited, we decided that one day an exhibition must be mounted and a more concentrated effort applied to organizing and understanding this part of Rauschenberg's work. A good many years later, this is that exhibition.

Nothing concerns Rauschenberg so much as the immediate present. For him to have allowed and aided with patience and good humor this long look back, we are deeply grateful.

There are a myriad of fellow workers with Rauschenberg's immediate staff to thank. Sustaining effort on the part of David White, Denise Le Beau, and all associated with Rauschenberg's New York studio, and Bradley Jeffries of the artist's Captiva Island studio, has contributed enormously to this exhibition's realization.

Many colleagues new and old offered invaluable research data and welcome advice throughout the project. I especially thank Carolyn Brown, Earle Brown, Nicolas Carone, Knox Martin, Cy Twombly, and Susan Weil, who generously provided extensive interviews. One must thank Calvin Tompkins for his intelligent and useful monograph *Off the Wall* and Roni Feinstein for her recent pioneering dissertation addressing early Rauschenberg works. Warm thanks are due to Margo Leavin, Leo Steinberg, and David Whitney for their insights and encouragement.

Exhibitions are always subject to the generosity of their lenders. Heartfelt thanks are due to more than twenty individuals and institutions who have parted with work that is unusually fragile.

From The Menil Collection staff, I wish to acknowledge my appreciation for the able contributions of its registrar Julie Addison Bakke; preparators, Buck Bakke and Gary "Bear" Parham; and research assistant, Lauri G. Nelson. The exacting analysis and conservation have been undertaken by Carol Mancusi–Ungaro, Elizabeth Lunning, and William Steen. Special thanks are due Don Quaintance for his tireless commitment well beyond that of publication designer. Former Menil Collection curators Neil Printz and Susan Davidson have shared and contributed to the concept and realization of this exhibition from its inception.

From the Corcoran Gallery of Art, I wish to thank Terrie Sultan, curator of contemporary art; Susan Rosenbaum, vice-president of development and public affairs; Robert Lehrman, chairman of the Board of Overseers of the Corcoran Museum of Art; and David C. Levy, president and director.

For their sustained support of, and faith in, the necessity of this exhibition, I extend my warmest thanks to Paul Winkler, acting director of The Menil Collection, and to its founder, Dominique de Menil.

Walter Hopps



1. Untitled, c. 1950 (cat. no. 3)

## Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s

### WALTER HOPPS

### INTRODUCTION

By 1976, the time of his second retrospective, Robert Rauschenberg was considered one of the foremost artists alive and arguably one of the most prodigious. From the outset the range of his materials and techniques, his sheer inventiveness, was to influence and prefigure the work of many artists to follow. By the mid 1970s it was clear to many of us that because of the diversity and quality of his oeuvre, both early on when he received little recognition and later after wide acceptance, Rauschenberg had become a protean, Picasso-like figure within our own time. The sheer profusion of Rauschenberg's works created in the last fifteen years has been daunting to the point that critics and historians have yet to make an adequate assessment of it.

Serious recognition of Rauschenberg did not come until the advent of his representation by the Leo Castelli Gallery, which was founded in 1957. Material success was elusive until 1963, the time of his Jewish Museum retrospective and his later prominence at the Venice Bienalle of 1964. By then, museum curators and private collectors were focusing on Rauschenberg's combines and silkscreens—in other words, his works from the

middle 1950s forward. Little critical, public, or commercial gallery attention was paid to his first five years of vital production.

A far greater amount of work was created from 1949–1953 than is generally known today. My own estimate would be in excess of 300 works of painting, sculpture, works on paper, and photography. Although some conspicuously important examples were lost or destroyed, approximately 150 survive.

Several factors contributed to the loss of the artist's work. One was Rauschenberg's near poverty during this entire period. Since he did not have a permanent working studio until the fall of 1953, Rauschenberg's life-style placed his artworks in constant transit and makeshift environments of a fairly extreme order. His first studio on Fulton Street in spring 1953 was threadbare. The \$15-amonth walk-up was ample, but it had no running water and the only utility was electricity. That he achieved so much is a testament to his own resourcefulness.

Furthermore, few early pieces were sold. He stored artworks as best he could in the studios of a variety of friends and artists, among them Jack Tworkov, who very responsibly preserved many things. Disastrously, much work that had been stored at Outer Island, the Connecticut property

of the parents of his colleague and wife Susan Weil, was destroyed in a fire during the summer of 1952. Other pieces were distributed for storage or for various exhibition projects that did not come to fruition. Many of these early works were lost in the world until Rauschenberg's recent attempts to recover what he could.

During the five years addressed in this exhibition, Rauschenberg matured essentially within the parameters of the New York art world and its unique cultural outpost at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. Rauschenberg's art arose from the broad ground of American abstract expressionism, essentially that part identified as the New York School. The sequence of this development, the extraordinary level of achievement, and the initial lack of critical understanding or support are all the concerns of this exhibition. Four discrete sequences in Rauschenberg's art of this period will be identified and explored in this text, the dividing points coinciding with important junctures in Rauschenberg's life and working locales.

The exhibition begins with Rauschenberg's first mature work, This is the First Half of a Print Designed to Exist in Passing Time., c. 1949, a small suite of fourteen woodcuts created while he was working at Black Mountain with Josef Albers. The exhibition concludes at a point of major transition just prior to Rauschenberg's combines such as Bed, 1950, and Monogram, 1955–59.

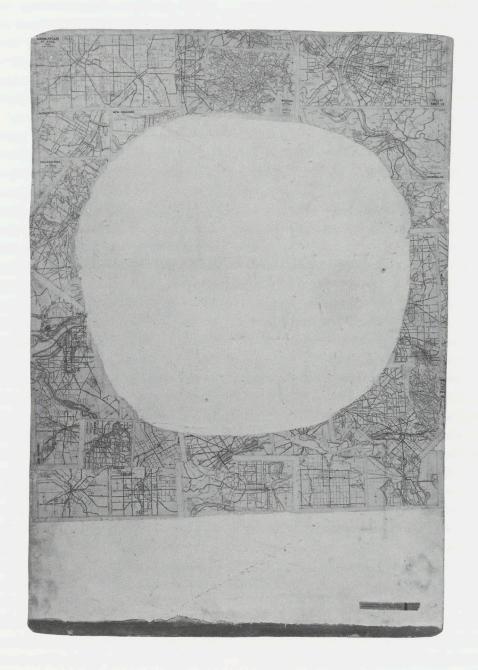
Although during this early period, and even today, critics failed to recognize Rauschenberg as a major abstract expressionist, it is my contention that he is indeed one of the highest order. Within Rauschenberg's 1949–1953 work are examples that unquestionably stand with those of his major predecessors in the New York School such as

Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman and also clearly with those of his contemporaries such as Richard Diebenkorn, Helen Frankenthaler, Sam Francis, and Cy Twombly.

Additionally, his innovations (blueprints and elemental sculptures) resonate back to those of Man Ray, who was unknown to Rauschenberg at the time, and forward to the work of such artists as Joseph Kosuth, Ed Ruscha, or Bruce Nauman in their use of text within the framework of an abstract work.

Rauschenberg also widened the scope of art that can be identified as conceptual, art linked not only to specific physical qualities. The set of reductive White Paintings, 1951, for example, carry meaning for many artists beyond their physical appearance. In addition, the serial set of five photographs Cy and Roman Steps, 1952, and most prominently, the Erased de Kooning Drawing, 1953, carry Rauschenberg's work beyond visible imagery into the vanguard of conceptual concerns. Sometime in the 1960s when Jasper Johns was cited by an important collector for his major innovations, Johns took exception, stating that Rauschenberg deserved credit as the most important innovator of his time.

Today, in retrospect, we recognize that beyond the excitement, encouragement, and support it afforded to contemporaries such as Johns and Twombly, Rauschenberg's vision enormously underlay such disparate developments as American Pop art, on the one hand, and aspects of later minimal art, on the other. Rauschenberg's ultimate contribution is the seemingly effortless manner in which his art both contains and resolves aesthetic disparities that have borne fruit on virtually diametrical lines of subsequent artistic development.



2. Mother of God, c. 1950 (cat. no. 7)

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND**

In 1925 Rauschenberg was born in Port Arthur, He was raised in a modest, workingclass Baptist family. As a crucial part of his early childhood, he built a small sanctuary within his room by stacking milk cartons, boxes, and vegetable crates to create a dividing wall for privacy. In the resulting compartments he collected and arranged a great miscellany of things that were meaningful to him, obsessively adding jars and boxes and all sorts of found specimens such as rocks, plants, insects, and small animals. Using magazines or any printed matter, he drew, traced, copied, cut out, pinned up, and glued. He probably utilized here most of the basic techniques found in his art to come. This primitive, grid-like construction created his first cultural environment and anticipated the physical and aesthetic form and complex juxtapositions of his entire oeuvre.

One often hears of Rauschenberg's shyness and of how his childhood pets became his companions. Rauschenberg's love of animals deflected him from a career as a pharmacist when he refused to dissect a live frog in a college biology class, which contributed to his leaving the University of Texas. His instinctive regard for living things also led to his noncombatant status in WWII. Rauschenberg was part of the generation of men, born in the teens and 1920s, who were drafted into military service and who survived the ordeal. He went through two years of sobering and maturing experiences as an attendant in a naval neuropsychiatric ward in San Diego, California.

Rauschenberg's artistic talent may have been first recognized in the Navy; his drawn likenesses of fellow GIs were admired and sought. Once, while on leave, Rauschenberg visited Southern California's Huntington Library to see its famous gardens. His chance discovery of the Art Gallery became his first museum experience. Seeing the lush eighteenth-century academic paintings of Gainsborough, Lawrence, and Reynolds was a shattering and inspiring experience. Rauschenberg came to the realization that art was an ambitious, serious enterprise that could be pursued by specific individuals. At that point he acquired materials and with much excitement began to paint.

In 1947, after his discharge and a year working in Los Angeles, with the encouragement of his friend Pat Perlman, Rauschenberg moved to Kansas City and enrolled in the Art Institute. One cannot underestimate for Rauschenberg and members of his generation the critical resource of the GI Bill, which afforded further education either at home or abroad, significantly not precluding art studies. He undertook a full range of traditional art training.

His teachers noted his tremendous energy and concentration on his course work. Supporting himself by doing jobs such as window display and set design, Rauschenberg in typical fashion seized upon any opportunity to put new knowledge and materials into practice.

In hopes of expanding his artistic training, Rauschenberg traveled to Paris in 1948 and enrolled in the Académie Julian. Finding the school's academic figurative approach and desultory instruction limiting, he profited mainly from his exposure to the Parisian art museums, a vocation he shared with fellow student Susan Weil.

He returned to America in the fall of 1948 to enroll with Weil at Black Mountain College, North Carolina. Black Mountain was an ideal place for Rauschenberg. The environment com-

bined the rigor and discipline of Josef Albers' Bauhaus art curricula with a spontaneous and intimate ambience that complemented Rauschenberg's restless and challenging nature. Despite Albers' disparagement and quite possibly his abusiveness toward the young artist's work, Rauschenberg received from him the important tenets of Bauhaus teaching. Albers emphasized the inherent nature and behavior of various materials and specific skills in their handling and manipulation.

By the end of his first semester, Rauschenberg had completed his essential art education. In successive residencies at Black Mountain, he found a supportive and creative environment for encountering other artists. The college also provided a place for producing new work at a time when he had no permanent studio.

In the late summer of 1949, Rauschenberg and Weil settled in New York City and enrolled in the Art Students League. After marriage in 1950, they rented a small apartment. For Rauschenberg the League served primarily as an additional studio roof over his head and a place to meet artists of his generation such as Knox Martin and Cy Twombly.

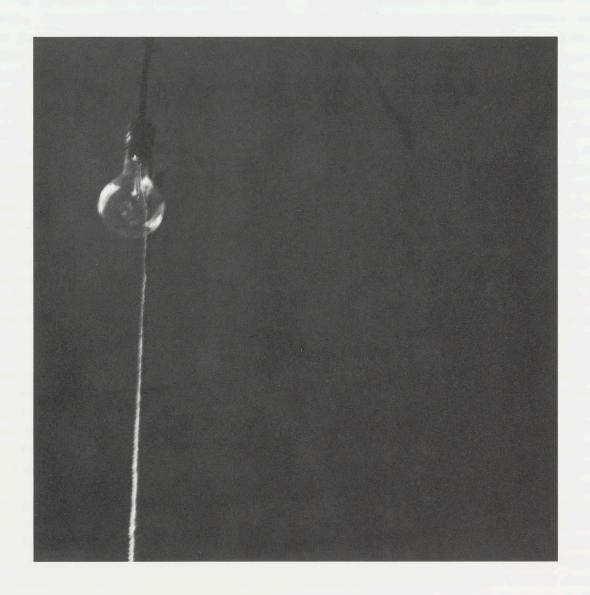
The art world of New York City in the early 1950s in reality was far more pluralistic than has been acknowledged in retrospect. Consider the disparate modes that included the realist art of Edward Hopper and Raphael Soyer, the hardedged geometric abstraction of Fritz Glarner and Illia Bolotowsky, the figurative expressionism of Abraham Ratner, the romantic surrealism of Pavel Tchelitchew, and the poetic objects of Joseph Cornell. If 1950 was in historical fact its zenith year, abstract expressionism was far from being perceived as the dominant art of the time. For any young, talented artist arriving in New York as a

primed blank slate to pursue abstract expressionism was not a foregone conclusion. But this was certainly the case with Rauschenberg, and it is amazing how he absorbed, internalized, and used the essential nature of the new art.

In the 1960s Marcel Duchamp commented on the unique, positive possibility for American artists to invent themselves with the least cultural baggage. The generation of Pollock and de Kooning had been faced with the powerful task of breaking free of Picasso and Matisse. Rauschenberg, however, proceeded directly from the precedent of his immediate older contemporaries without the encumbrances of early twentieth-century concerns. Rauschenberg's natural proclivity to seize the moment, deal with the possibilities at hand, then proceed to new territory cannot be overemphasized.

Among the newer vanguard galleries founded in the later 1940s were those of Charles Egan, Betty Parsons, and Samuel Kootz. Few others were responsive to the new abstract expressionist art. The first one-person shows of Joseph Cornell, Franz Kline, and Willem de Kooning occurred at the Egan Gallery; of Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Clyfford Still at the Betty Parsons Gallery; and of Robert Motherwell at the Kootz Gallery. All suffered a conspicuous lack of commercial response during those years. It is worth noting that little of this new art was being shown in New York's museums either.

Rauschenberg avidly frequented the newer galleries, where he found the art liberating and inspiring. He immediately perceived in this kind of art an exciting frontier from which to depart. Rauschenberg was scarcely alone among his peers in his embrace of abstract expressionism. However,



3. Ceiling and Light Bulb, 1950 (cat. no. 12)

painting and drawing are the primary media in abstract expressionism. What is unique in Rauschenberg's case is his unselfconscious openness to work in disparate media and materials—painting, photography, and object-making.

### WORKS OF 1949-1953

Within the five-year span of Rauschenberg's first important work, four successive periods can be identified, each marked by specific moments of transition in his living and working circumstances. Although the successive periods embrace a great diversity in media, each evinces its own coherence in the logic of Rauschenberg's development.

These four periods are generally identified as follows:

The first period (early spring 1949 through May 1951) covers Rauschenberg's first stay at Black Mountain College, his first engaged encounter with the New York art scene, and his first mature works and their landmark exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery in spring 1951.

The second period (summer 1951 to summer 1952) includes Rauschenberg's second and third stays at Black Mountain College, interspersed with visits back and forth to New York.

The third period (fall 1952 to spring 1953) includes Rauschenberg's travel and work in Europe and North Africa, primarily staying in a modest studio/apartment in Rome and working for a construction company in Tangier.

During the fourth period (early spring through winter 1953), Rauschenberg maintained his first viable studio on Fulton Street in the waterfront district of New York City.

## I. Spring 1949-Spring 1951, Black Mountain and New York City

The earliest important works of Rauschenberg are not paintings. They are photographs and unique works in a blueprint medium that he and his thenwife Susan Weil began making together. These brought him his earliest recognition. In 1951 The Museum of Modern Art included a blueprint in a show about innovative ways of making light-sensitized images, "Abstraction in Photography." Two Rauschenberg photographs were acquired by Edward Steichen for the same museum in 1952—his first works to enter a museum collection.

Many aspects of his photographic art, interesting in their own right, merged quickly with important concerns of Rauschenberg's later work. Consider the density and mystery of the blacks in Untitled (Interior of an Old Carriage), 1949, or Ceiling and Light Bulb, 1950 (fig. 3), or New York City (Stop), 1951. The shapes and images are telling. They contain a marked reductive quality, yet they include specific images that differentiate them from the work of Aaron Siskind, a major photographer of de Kooning's generation whom Rauschenberg knew. Objects are static and flat in Rauschenberg's photographs in a way different from the narrative incident in the work of such photographers as Robert Frank, a then largely unknown contemporary.

The blueprints that Rauschenberg and Weil began as creative and resourceful play quickly presented two distinct possibilities. While blueprints were made as serious artworks in their own right, their commercial applications such as in window displays were pursued as well. The last of Rauschenberg's commercial blueprints were made

in collaboration with Jasper Johns in 1955 under the pseudonym Matson Jones. A distinction between the artwork blueprints (such as in this exhibition) and the decorative commercial ones was made by Rauschenberg from the beginning.

Blueprints of silhouetted human figures (fig. 1) in life-size scale that seemed arresting and beautiful at the time-witness a precocious spread in Life magazine of 1951—remain powerful today. They also evince another important characteristic that differentiated them from then-current abstract expressionist painting: one-to-one scale or actual physical scale versus ambiguous pictorial scale. This sense of actual scale developed as one of the major characteristics of Rauschenberg's work throughout his career. At this time it was unusual for any work on paper to be as large as Rauschenberg's major blueprints. Even Man Ray's pioneering rayograms had not grown to nearly this size. Furthermore, these remarkable renderings of the human figure on the picture plane anticipated the process inherent in the celebrated anthropometries (silhouetted female nudes) of the French artist Yves Klein in the 1960s.

Although his first important work was photographic, painting was a major pursuit of Rauschenberg's after 1950. His seemingly instant understanding and absorption of advanced abstract expressionist modes of painting still seem remarkable and virtually without precedent. Rauschenberg's work at the Art Student's League was so unlike that of faculty and students that he received little positive feedback from most of his peers. The Art Students' League did afford studio space, and he began to meet a network of fellow artists. He briefly had a decrepit studio in a condemned building on Willets Street.

When Rauschenberg brought a set of paintings for review to Betty Parsons, whose gallery he admired, he had the great luck of being offering a one-person show. With Parsons, Clyfford Still helped select the work. Characteristically, Rauschenberg took a great risk, reworking several paintings prior to the exhibition. This reworking seems to have involved the then-unusual additions of unique collage elements in seemingly unpainterly ways.

Sparse critical response to the Parsons Gallery show of May 1951 was cool at best, expressing reservations or bewilderment. Nothing sold. A deeply disappointed Rauschenberg did not realize that Parsons was selling little work by her gallery's other artists such as Pollock and Rothko. Nonetheless, John Cage, the vanguard composer, intellectual, and an enthusiast for new art, happened upon the show. Cage, who admired it enormously, asked for and was given a painting. Rauschenberg's friendship with Cage, which began a year later, had major consequences. Of the approximately fifteen works in this first show, few have survived. Three are in this exhibition.

Of these three, the work most attuned with abstract expressionism is Untitled, 1950. The play of simply drawn forms and figure—ground relationships reflects some of the techniques found in Robert Motherwell's painting of the early fifties.

Two more problematic and radical works are Crucifixion and Reflection, c. 1950, and Mother of God, c. 1950 (fig. 2). The former, in its rectilinear minimalism and flat surface articulation, stands as a landmark of American minimalism. Mother of God, on the other hand, employed a combination of collage and painting that was as radical a departure from Cubist tenets as either Harold Rosenberg or Clement Greenberg, champions of abstract



4. Untitled (from Night
Blooming series), c. 1951
(cat. no. 16)

expressionist work, could have imagined. It is worth noting that Adolph Gottlieb's signature use of floating round forms evolved some years later than *Mother of God*. An extraordinary sculptural work (not in this exhibition) of cast plaster, chianti bottles, and a glass rod evinces a daring use of materials unprecedented in abstract expressionist sculpture.

Other paintings from the Parsons Gallery show, no longer extant, such as *Should Love Come First*, c.1950, where bits of collage material and reflective mirrors were attached, amazingly anticipated the combination of abstract painting with collaged images and physical matter that appeared throughout Rauschenberg's work after 1953. These works (unlike Kurt Schwitters' or dada collage with which Rauschenberg had little familiarity at the time) tended to make the small world of Parsons' constituency the most uneasy. The works did not fit in any easy category and looked "impure." Today they can be recognized as landmarks, intimations of Rauschenberg's future combines.

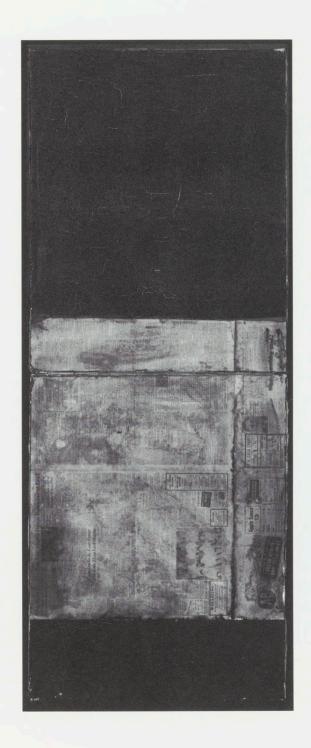
## II. Summer 1951 – Summer 1952, Black Mountain

In the summer of 1951 Rauschenberg returned to Black Mountain College. Twombly, now a close colleague, also enrolled at this time. Rauschenberg's art in this period centered around photography but emphasized painting. His most important photographs of this time are portraits: *Merce* [Cunningham], 1952; *John Cage*, *Black Mountain*, 1951; *Cy*, *Black Mountain*, c. 1952; and self-portraits. Four successive unique bodies of painting follow during this period.

A cycle of paintings with dark figure-ground relationships called the *Night Blooming* series ensued (fig. 4). These paintings, up to eight feet, were the largest of Rauschenberg's to date. At least twenty such works were created, Twombly testifying to Rauschenberg's feverish night-and-day engagement with this series. Industrial asphaltum and red lead paint were blended with black and white oils. He gave the paintings an earthy texture by imprinting them with gravel from a roadbed, covering the gravel with subsequent layers of paint. The known *Night Bloomings* carry the motif of a small orb near the top of the canvas.

These paintings are prime examples of what Harold Rosenberg termed action painting—the actions and reactions of the artist in process constitute the painting's form. Rauschenberg had the incisive instinct to work with materials and processes at hand rather than with a preconceived notion of what the painting might be. Spontaneous actions were kept or rejected based on the composition he saw developing in the work. These works came the closest to the work of Franz Kline (which Rauschenberg loved) without aping their forms. Most of the Night Blooming paintings (along with works by Twombly) were informally sent to Chicago for exhibition by a friend of Aaron Siskind, but Rauschenberg's were never shown, and all were thought lost until the 1970s. Of these works only the three in this exhibition are known to have survived.

Later in summer 1951 Rauschenberg conceived and first executed perhaps his most radical paintings to date: a series of contiguous modular paintings with pure, uninflected white surfaces. The set includes a single square, a diptych, a triptych, a four-panel work, and one with seven vertical panels. An asymmetric five-panel work was made, but



5. Untitled, c. 1952 (cat. no. 27)

later its canvas panels were used in other paintings.

Rauschenberg conceived of these as perfectly rational and beautiful paintings, where he had simply reduced the artist-provided elements to their logical minimum. That these paintings became palpable objects subject to ambient light and shadow was of acute importance as well. For Cage they were a supreme inspiration, reinforcing his notions of the significance of silence and ambient sound in his own music. Not inconsequentially, the *White Paintings* emerged when Cage and his colleague Merce Cunningham were part of the Black Mountain College milieu.

The White Paintings became a growing legend, first in vanguard circles, greatly troubling the older generation of abstract expressionists. These works were instantly controversial—loved by few, hated by many, and generally misunderstood. Not until a generation following Rauschenberg did their peaceful and contemplative nature begin to be appreciated.

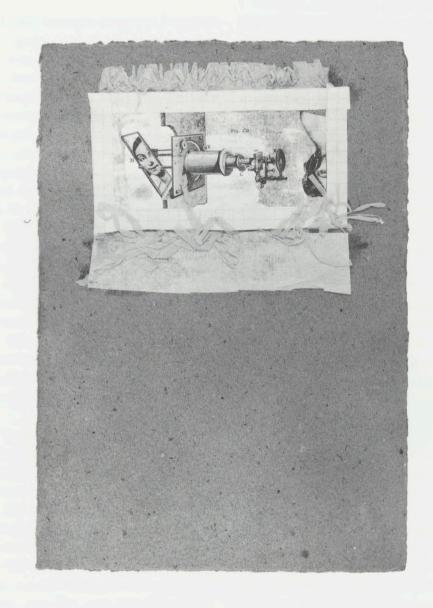
Rauschenberg also executed one example of this highly reductive approach in a black triptych (exhibited here). Closely related to the *White Paintings*, it is the first and perhaps only purely black painting Rauschenberg created.

Following the revolutionary White Paintings and matte black triptych, Rauschenberg undertook a second and differing approach to black monochromatic painting. He overlaid glossy black paint on subtle textured and relief forms built up on canvas with newspaper. Two of these somber and serious works survive. The large untitled four-panel work, c. 1951, stands as one of the most beautiful paintings of Rauschenberg's career.

Of the remaining works of this period, five are known to have survived: two paintings, two works on paper, and a sculpture. All incorporate foundin-the-world material. A vertical painting, Untitled [black painting with newspaper], 1952 (fig. 5), introduces a full unembellished sheet of a Charleston newspaper as part of the composition, centered between areas of black paint above and below. This painting, as powerful as Rauschenberg's renowned 22 the Lily White, c. 1950, anticipated the austere compositions to emerge in Johns' work. This deceptively simple work exists as a fascinating bridge between the early radical use of a newspaper sheet by Man Ray in 1915 (publicly reviled in its time and unknown to Rauschenberg) and art from the mid 1960s when words and text became important images in painting. I can think of no work from the mid century involving newsprint that more radically departs from all earlier Cubist compositions.

The sculpture Untitled, 1952 (previously unexhibited), dramatically utilizes a soft-drink crate as a compartmentalized grid, resonating between humble found object and an armature for subtle painting and collage. The grid structure is another telling portent of the work of Johns from the mid fifties on, and a red Coca-Cola logo looming inside carries an early gene for American Pop imagery.

In 1952 Rauschenberg tried to secure a second show at the Betty Parsons Gallery. He was denied, probably due to pressure exerted on the gallery by its older artists. The controversial nature of some of his work had alienated many members of the New York scene. At this same time, soon after the birth of his son Christopher, Rauschenberg's marriage to Weil dissolved and ended in divorce. Without a home or studio in New York, Rauschenberg set sail for Europe with Twombly, who had received a small financial windfall that helped to finance the trip.



6. Untitled, c. 1952 (cat. no. 54)



7. Untitled, c. 1952, from the series Scatole E Feticci Personali [Box and Personal Fetishes] (cat. no. 63)

## III. Fall 1952-Spring 1953, Europe and North Africa

From the fall of 1952 Rauschenberg and Twombly explored Italy, Spain, and Paris, and later, as circumstances arose, North Africa. Some of Rauschenberg's most important photographs for his own future imagery were taken then. Pictures of weathered, encrusted objects in the Rome fleamarkets became basic images Rauschenberg would choose to use in later works. One extraordinary series of photographs, Cy and Roman Steps, 1952, in its simple but clear way is a conceptual work recalling This is the First Half of a Print Designed to Exist in Passing Time., c. 1949. The five sequential photographs depict nothing but steps and the torso of a man moving closer to the photographer. The unusual device of cropping the head of the subject, Twombly, reinforces the distanced and conceptual rather than personal and depictive quality of the work. Again, this kind of artwork in concept reemerged in artists like Bruce Nauman and others in America as well as in many artists following Josef Beuys and Klaus Rinke in the Düsseldorf vanguard of the 1960s.

Constrained by constant traveling, limited available accommodations, and the demands of a menial job in North Africa, Rauschenberg was forced to work on a smaller, more intimate scale. His primary media became the collaged use of found native papers and old engravings from bookstalls and fleamarkets, materials that reflect place and circumstance totally. While they superficially echo Max Ernst and Joseph Cornell collages, their compositional palette and sensibility are pure Rauschenberg. Ranging from austere and minimal to rich and imagistic, they emphasize their surface and ma-

terial nature and conform to Rauschenberg's signature rectilinear configurations.

In these collages (fig. 6) the subtle shifts of color and surface structure are not just backgrounds on which images occur; the entire format is crucial to the work. This aspect is at the bounds of minimal art, where one savors the unembellished areas of materiality. These works have never been framed, existing almost like hand-held objects.

The collages took on symmetrical compositions, like plaques. They repeat two formats, either a near square or an elongated vertical rectangle. Neither employing Cubist-angled intersecting planes nor carrying the narrative implications of the Ernst/Cornell works of dada/surrealism, these collages are intimate, iconic tablets merging material with images. Even splatters and oozings of glue are incorporated into the composition. Some of the collages have options built in to alter the composition with hinged flaps or pockets. These devices presaged later kinds of mutability for repositioning elements within a work: aspects opened or closed, seen or not seen, as in some elemental sculptures of the following year and in such combines of 1955 as Interview and Short Circuit, as well as in Rauschenberg's fabric Hoarfrosts of the mid 1970s.

In 1976 it was discovered that of these works thought lost or destroyed, more than three dozen still exist. Four beautiful examples owned by Weil are shown for the first time. Rauschenberg had mailed these to her from Europe.

In North Africa Rauschenberg and Twombly empathized with the primitive modes of life and raw but beautiful materials found in the native populace. Rauschenberg fabricated from wood, ropes, bones, and fabric a series of fetish-like sculptural work. He also accumulated from flea-

market finds the objects to make an amazing array of small boxed assemblages. While the collages tend to have an abstract, iconlike presence, the assemblages function as reliquaries for either precious or seemingly random found objects, evoking an ambiguity without symbolist portent or sentiment. Desultory finds are singled out.

Rauschenberg's good luck was that these unusual works, part of a series named Box and Personal Fetishes (fig. 7), were shown in a vanguard gallery first in Rome, then in Florence, causing a small stir of controversy. A few were bought by amused Italian collectors. None of the fiber cloth works and elaborate weavings also done at this time are known to survive, but beautiful photographs exist of these works hung from trees in a public park. Legend has it that following a vicious attack by a newspaper critic in Florence, Rauschenberg followed the critic's advice and threw the offending works into the Arno River. However, Rauschenberg and Twombly managed to save more than a few of the boxed assemblages, and others have somehow survived with various collectors since the 1950s.

These small boxed assemblages further linked the works of Cornell and Man Ray with Rauschenberg's activity after the mid 1950s. This rich vein of American assemblage art continued with Rauschenberg's later work and that of Edward Kienholtz, Bruce Conner, Robert Indiana, Claes Oldenburg, and others.

## IV. Spring 1953 – Winter 1953, Fulton Street Studio, New York City

When Rauschenberg returned to New York from Europe in the spring of 1953, for the first time he was able to obtain an ample sustaining studio on Fulton Street near the East River in Manhattan's antique waterfront district. It is in the Fulton Street studio that Rauschenberg successively produced his last series of essentially black paintings, his extremely controversial elemental sculptures and paintings, two preconceived radical landmark works construed as conceptual gestures, and a vibrant series of red paintings. With this body of work Rauschenberg concluded his unique contribution to abstract expressionism.

Generally, in the work of this period Rauschenberg, while still working within the canvas of abstract expressionism, pursued the material and concrete nature of his work beyond anything conceived by the generation of de Kooning and Pollock. The Fulton Street studio became both a sanctuary and a cauldron of unique creative activity.

Anxious to proceed with new work, Rauschenberg painted over two of his extant small paintings from the Betty Parsons Gallery show. Both became highly textured works layered with newspaper and black paint. Amazingly, one was the unique collaged painting Should Love Come First. The second was the small painting belonging to John Cage, also from the Parsons Gallery show. While the Fulton Street studio was being fumigated, Rauschenberg, staying in Cage's apartment, surreptitiously repainted the canvas. When the occasion demanded, making new work overrode any sentiment he might have for past accomplishments.

As circumstances and resource allowed, Rauschenberg went on to make his largest paintings of the time. Complex surfaces and textures were built up on his canvases. Although layers of black paint were dominant, blue, white, and brown were



8. Untitled (Elemental Sculpture), 1953 (cat. no. 100)

blended into the rather encrusted and deliberately ravaged surfaces of these both somber and highly activated paintings. This final series of black paintings is more wildly variegated in their colors and paint application techniques than any of their predecessors.

In one important work, Untitled, 1953, a strong duality emerges. An area of monochrome black on the left is strikingly juxtaposed to an activated black-brown zone on the right. This painting echoes the composition of some of his previous European collages, and the composition magically evokes both calmness and agitation.

The successive black paintings from the Fulton Street studio continued in that vein of dense elaboration, where flatness and articulated surface play within a more complex and rich palette of blue and brown. Though these paintings have often been portrayed as monochromatic, they employed active, even loose, materials and introduced an unsettling, almost harsh surface quality.

Interestingly, contained within the smaller elements of these paintings are condensations of the gestural qualities of differing abstract expressionist styles. Such details convey the structures of de Kooning, the splatters and drips of Pollock, and thrusting post-and-beam forms as delicate as those of Tworkov and as powerful as those of Kline. At a distance the surfaces have some of the overall pictorial field pioneered by Still. While such details survey the gestures and mark-makings of abstract expressionism, the overall paintings disallow any internal sense of space, discourage visual penetration of the picture plane, and deliberately assert their surface accumulation of flat matter and built-up paint. This quality preceded the more rigorously rendered black paintings of Frank Stella

a decade later. Rauschenberg's dark-toned paintings, though full of incident, create a spatial ambiguity by perceptibly insisting on their surface character.

In counterpoint to this series of dark-toned paintings are a series of sculptures made of very simple materials such as wood, rock, and twine, which Rauschenberg designated as "elemental sculptures" (fig. 8). Using a set of found materials that also included blocky rectilinear boxes, spikes, bits of metal, and simple twine or rope, Rauschenberg invented a series of objects that do not simply exist as compositions but also imply a sense of performance.

Rocks and boxes are tethered by ropes; stones are trapped by spikes within boxes. The viewer responds to the possibility of change without requiring a tactile relation to the works. Though these compositions can be viewed statically, the mind's eye presumes their mutability, their potential for change. Two disparate antecedents for this quality can be seen in the mobiles of Alexander Calder and many of Cornell's boxes where permutations are invited. In a fresh, rudimentary fashion, Rauschenberg has explored the visual tensions implicit in these works.

In some works such as *Music Box*, c. 1953, literal change and motion are encouraged. Here rocks are trapped by spikes in a wooden box, and clanking sounds result when the box is rotated. These random sounds are closely allied not only to the music of Cage but also to the aesthetics of Cage's mentor, Duchamp. Once when examining the *Music Box*, Duchamp remarked that it was playing his tune.

In the elemental sculptures Rauschenberg used materials in purely natural configurations, with-



9. Dirt Painting (for John Cage), 1953 (cat. no. 86)

out overt fabrication, carving, decoration, or embellishment. The objects arrange themselves as the caprices of display allowed, conveying only the drama of their gravity and suspension.

These paintings and elemental sculptures, as well as several key earlier works, were exhibited in fall 1953 at the Stable Gallery, where Rauschenberg had incidentally gained custodial employment. This show was shared with Twombly, and Rauschenberg's typical exuberance led the two artists to reclaim the decrepit lower level of the gallery, which afforded an increased exhibition area. In the critical and public mind, this show clinched Rauschenberg's reputation as, at best, the wild boy of the American vanguard and, at worst, a flippant joker. At the time of this exhibition no artist since Pollock had become so controversial, and public misunderstanding persisted. Until the advent of Leo Steinberg's reconsideration of Rauschenberg in the early 1960s, little incisive supportive criticism was published. Except for empathetic artists such as Tworkov, Cage, and Twombly, Rauschenberg's viscerally seminal work found extremely limited acceptance.

Prior to and after the Stable Gallery show, Rauschenberg embarked on an even more radical body of work: elemental paintings. Among these works was a large canvas of white lead paint. Realizing early on that this rich, uniformly textured canvas was too large to be removed from his studio, Rauschenberg nevertheless lavished attention on the work. His conscious, careful documentation of its existence conveyed an awareness of the process of the painting's creation as a kind of static performance. The ultimate permanence of the work came not to concern the artist. Recently, a small painting of a similarly articulated white lead

surface has been brought to light and is included in this exhibition.

The impulse to paint with "unpaintlike" materials continued and expanded as Rauschenberg explored the extremes of what might viably constitute painting. The idea of making "paintings" of the simplest paper, dirt, and gold captured Rauschenberg's imagination. A crumpled tissue-paper composition was supported between glass. Dirt, mud, and clay were compacted in shallow box frames and hung vertically on the wall (fig. 9). The artist relished the exigencies of exposure of these organic materials to the environment and the resulting natural evolutions such as the growth of mold. At a Stable Gallery Annual late in 1953, one such dirt painting was seeded with plant life and sprouted growing forms. Rauschenberg watered the painting during the course of the exhibition.

Having used paint, paper, and dirt, Rauschenberg executed several small relief paintings with highly textured overall surfaces composed of gold leaf. Rauschenberg's contemporary Yves Klein was to independently produce a series of edge-to-edge monochrome gold paintings a decade later. Rauschenberg's personal aesthetics considered the more conventionally lowly dirt and paper works as equally important as those of traditionally precious metal. But he correctly predicted that the gold paintings would more likely survive the vagaries of time and the art marketplace. With his elemental paintings Rauschenberg reminded his audience of the natural qualities of any material employed in his art.

Late in 1953 Rauschenberg developed two consciously conceptual works, immediately infamous and often misinterpreted. One was a serial work involving a predetermined performance act, *Auto-*

mobile Tire Print, c. 1953. Rauschenberg glued together sheets of paper to make a strip twenty-two feet long. On a quiet Sunday he directed Cage in his Model A Ford to drive as straight as possible down the length of the paper as Rauschenberg applied ink to the automobile's tires. The resulting black on white elongated print of a tire in motion acquired its own mystique as an act of art-making, even though until recently it rarely has been exhibited or reproduced.

Similarly, a second work has lived in people's imaginations while little direct knowledge of the artifact itself was available. The *Erased de Kooning Drawing*,1953, carried a real shock for some and a unique weight for others. This gesture has been enormously misunderstood. Early in his New York experience, Rauschenberg had sincerely admired de Kooning's work and through Tworkov had met the older artist. Rauschenberg approached de Kooning with the idea that he would select one of his drawings, erase it as thoroughly as possible, and conventionally exhibit the resulting work.

The *obliteration* of de Kooning's drawing was significant, but it was not Rauschenberg's only intention. As he remarked at the time, had he chosen to erase a Rembrandt drawing, the gesture would most certainly have been viewed as nihilistic and anti-art. Instead he was concerned with the resultant residue and evidence of the reductive manipulations, an unusual kind of artistic collaboration. Amazingly, de Kooning came to understand and accept the plan and cooperated by providing a deviously dense example of crayon, pencil, and possibly ink, which would present a serious challenge for Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg relished this response. Examination of the original reveals distinct traces of de Kooning's hand *and* Rauschenberg's

erasure techniques. The final ensemble consists of a gold frame, special mat, and label clearly stating the date and title, all as essential elements.

A special quality of both the *Erased de Kooning Drawing* and *Automobile Tire Print* is that each involved Rauschenberg's collaboration with a master: de Kooning, who stood at one zenith of the abstract expressionist aesthetic, and the younger Cage, whose extreme philosophy portended a direction for art that would lead to profound variance with New York School sensibilities. Rauschenberg's additive and reductive conceptual gestures resonate across these two distinct aesthetics.

Finally, late in 1953 Rauschenberg executed a set of essentially abstract paintings. The significant change was a shift in color to a dominant red and a new treatment of surface materials. The *Red Paintings* were executed in an unknown quantity, but five or possibly six still exist.

Although many colors, notably red, appeared as early as the Parsons Gallery show and in the Night Blooming paintings, Rauschenberg's emersion in vivid red paint after a sustained period of works primarily black, black-blue, white, and brown was a startling departure. Seen in any context, the Red Paintings are smashingly loud and assertive. Only one is primarily red. Another exposes horizontal wooden planks at top and bottom. A third, Red Painting, 1953 (fig. 10), employs assertive bands of colored fabric played against the red paint. Though the basic physical surface relates to the later black paintings, the unrelenting red in these paintings is more emotionally declarative. One small surviving fragment of a larger canvas, Red Painting, 1953, illustrates how distinctive abstract expressionist elements are part of Rauschenberg's larger more overall format. This almost violent work has an extremely physical presence.

The final work in Rauschenberg's series of *Red Paintings* is the climactic work titled *Yoicks*, 1953. The largest of the series, it includes horizontally banded strips of yellow polka-dotted fabric and paint. A rugged geometrical rhythm echoes across the canvas, and the optical interplay of red and yellow bands intensifies the impact of this work. It demonstrates the exultant qualities of these paintings created at the moment that Rauschenberg chose to open his vibrant palette.

Significantly, the very next large work completed in his studio was an untitled painting to which Rauschenberg attached, at the top, a found colored-glass valance with electric bulbs that illuminate the glass fixture and the painting. At the bottom a deep sill or shelf reveals the residue of the artist's process and working materials. This conceptual shift, which united the surface and structure of abstract expressionism with real threedimensional objects, took place in early 1954. This work is undoubtedly Rauschenberg's first combine. Yoicks, the last red painting, marks the close of Rauschenberg's more purely abstract expressionist concerns, and the untitled work with light fixture and shelf pioneers the extraordinary period of his classic mid fifties works.

It is fascinating to note that Rauschenberg took great pains to document both of the aforementioned works, which appear together on the studio wall in several photographs. Each view shows part of *Yoichs* on the left and a similar part of the first combine on the right, but it explicitly focuses on the wall space between. Rauschenberg later, in one of his most famous aphorisms, stated that he is interested in both art and life but likes to work in the space in between. In these photographs, as in

much of the work in this exhibition, Rauschenberg illustrates his inherent knack for illuminating the obvious through the processes and artifacts of his work. He symbolically documents a crucial transition that simultaneously illustrates the stated nature of his art.

#### AN ORDER FOUND

Rauschenberg at his highest level is an explorer and inventor. He relishes the simple known facts of things, both animate and inanimate. For him poetry is not a reverie of introspection but direct act and process. Finding, doing, and experiencing. All of these attributes are informed with a serious intelligence, an optimistic wit free of an undercurrent of irony, and an openness to a breadth of experience.

The late American art historian Joshua Taylor wrote tellingly of Rauschenberg's works, characterizing them as ". . . freeing the viewer to discover beauty and meaning where he might least expect it . . . a beauty that comes from order found, not order given, as if its permanent harmony existed precariously in a transient and unpredictable world."

10. Red Painting, 1953 (cat. no. 91)



## Works in the Exhibition

## I. Spring 1949-Spring 1951: Black Mountain and New York City

WORKS ON PAPER

- This is the First Half of a Print Designed to Exist in Passing Time., c. 1949
   14 woodcuts (ink on paper) and title page (pencil on paper) bound at top with cord
   12½ x 8½ x c. ½
   Collection of the artist
- Untitled, c. 1950
   Monoprint: exposed blueprint paper 54¼ x 41
   Collection of Carolyn Brown and Earle Brown, New York
- Untitled, c. 1950
   Monoprint: exposed blueprint paper 82½ x 36¼
   Collection of Cy Twombly, Rome
- Untitled, c. 1950
   Monoprint: exposed blueprint paper 94½ x 35½
   Ludwig Collection, Aachen
- 5. Female Figure, c. 1950Monoprint: exposed blueprint paper 105 x 36Collection of the artist

All dimensions are given in inches; height precedes width precedes depth. Information within parentheses () following a title was ascribed by the artist; information within brackets [] is for descriptive purposes only.

#### PAINTINGS

- Crucifixion and Reflection, c. 1950
   Oil, enamel, water-based paint, and newspaper on paperboard and wood 47<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>1 x 51<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>
   The Menil Collection, Houston
- 7. Mother of God, c. 1950
  [Previously: Untitled [road map]]
  Oil on printed road maps and newspaper on masonite
  8 x 32½
  Collection of the artist
- 8. Untitled, 1950
  [Previously: Untitled [Basketball Court]]
  Oil on canvas
  26½ x 35½
  Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,
  Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.;
  gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966
- Untitled, c. 1951
   Oil, metallic paint, pencil, printed paper, hair, and glass on canvas
   16½ x 18
   Collection of Jasper Johns, New York City

#### PHOTOGRAPHS

- 10. Untitled (Interior of an Old Carriage), 1949
  Gelatin silver photograph
  15 x 15 (image)
  Collection of the artist
- 11. *Quiet House*, 1949
  Gelatin silver photograph
  15 x 15 (image)
  Collection of the artist
- 12. Ceiling and Light Bulb, 1950Gelatin silver photograph15 x 15 (image)Collection of the artist
- 13. Susan, Central Park N.Y.C. (II), 1950 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist
- 14. *New York City (Stop)*, 1951 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist

## II. Summer 1951 – Summer 1952: Black Mountain

### PAINTINGS

- 15. Untitled (from Night Blooming series), c. 1951
  [Previously: 5 White Circles on Black]
  Oil, asphaltum, and gravel on canvas 87¾ x 25¾
  Private collection
- 16. Untitled (from Night Blooming series), c. 1951
   Oil, asphaltum, and gravel on canvas
   2½ x 38%
   Collection of the artist
- 17. Untitled (from Night Blooming series), c. 1951
  Oil, asphaltum, and gravel on canvas
  62<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 31<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>
  The Menil Collection, Houston
- 18. White Painting, 1951
  Oil on canvas
  48 x 48
  Collection of the artist
- 19. White Painting, 1951
  Oil on canvas
  Two panels: 72 x 48 each; 72 x 96 overall
  Collection of the artist
- 20. White Painting, 1951
  Oil on canvas
  Three panels: 72 x 36 each; 72 x 108 overall
  Collection of the artist

#### WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

21. White Painting, 1951

Oil on canvas

Four panels: 36 x 36 each; 72 x 72 overall

Collection of the artist

22. White Painting, 1951

Oil on canvas

Seven panels: 72 x 18 each; 72 x 126 overall

Collection of the artist

23. Untitled [matte black painting], c. 1951

Oil on canvas

Three panels: 72 x 36 each; 72 x 108 overall

Collection of the artist

24. Untitled [glossy black painting], c. 1951

Oil on paper on canvas

71½ x 52¾

Collection of the artist

25. Untitled [glossy black painting], c. 1951

Oil and newspaper on canvas

Four panels: 87 x 4234 each; 87 x 171 overall

Collection of the artist

26. Untitled [black painting], c. 1952

Oil and fabric on fabric

 $30 \times 30$ 

Collection of the artist

27. Untitled, c. 1952

Oil and newspaper on canvas

72 x 28½

Collection of the artist

28. Untitled, 1952

Ink, enamel, and gouache on tracing paper and

newspaper on paperboard

261/4 x 221/2

Private collection

29. Untitled, 1952

Gold, copper, and enamel paints on newspaper

on paper

26% x 211/8

Private collection

#### SCULPTURE

30. Untitled, 1952

Assemblage: paint, mirror, glass, roll film, and

paper on wood soda pop crate

183/8 x 113/4 x 41/4

Collection of Cy Twombly, Rome

### PHOTOGRAPHS

31. Postcard Self-Portrait, Black Mountain (I),

c. 1951

Gelatin silver photograph

55/8 x 31/4 (image)

Collection of the artist

32. Postcard Self-Portrait, Black Mountain (II),

c. 1951

Gelatin silver photograph

31/4 x 55/8 (image)

Collection of the artist

- 33. Untitled (Cy on Bench), 1951
  Vintage gelatin silver photograph
  10½ x 9½ (image)
  The Museum of Modern Art, New York City
  Nelson A. Rockefeller Fund
- 34. *John Cage, Black Mountain*, 1951 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist
- 35. *Merce*, 1952
  Gelatin silver photograph
  15 x 15 (image)
  Collection of the artist
- 36. Sneakers, 1950Gelatin silver photograph15 x 15 (image)Collection of the artist
- 37. *Charleston Window*, 1952 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist
- 38. 'Topher, c. 1952 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist
- 39. *Cy, Black Mountain*, c. 1952 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist

# III. Fall 1952-Spring 1953: Europe and North Africa

#### WORKS ON PAPER

- 40. **Untitled** [two arrows], c. 1952
  Gouache, newsprint, pencil, and glue on cardboard 11 x 5½
  Collection of the artist
- 41. **Untitled** [3 circles], c. 1952 Ink and pencil on paper 8 x 31/8 Collection of the artist
- 42. Untitled [Hotel Bilbao], c. 1952 Collage: printed paper, fabric, pencil, and glue on horizontally hinged paper 11½ x 10½ (opened); 7¼ x 10½ (closed) Collection of the artist
- 43. **Untitled**, c. 1952 Collage: paper, ink, and glue on paperboard 14 x 51/8 Collection of Susan Weil, New York City
- 44. Untitled, c. 1952
  Collage: paper, ink, and glue on paperboard
  13% x 5
  Collection of Susan Weil, New York City
- 45. Untitled [foot dissection], c. 1952
  Collage: engraving, ink, pencil, and glue on paperboard
  14 x 5
  Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City

#### WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

- 46. Untitled [embryo], c. 1952
  Collage: engraving, pencil, and glue on paperboard
  14 x 5
  Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City
- 47. Untitled [frog and turtle], c. 1952
  Collage: engravings, pencil, and glue on paperboard
  14 x 5
  Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City
- 48. Untitled [palm of hand], c. 1952 Collage: engraving, pencil, and glue on paperboard 14 x 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Collection of the artist
- 49. Untitled [pictographs and feather], c. 1952 Collage: printed paper, fabric, feathers, and glue on two vertically hinged papers on paperboard 10 x 6% Collection of the artist
- 50. Untitled [necklace], c. 1952
   Collage: engravings, paper, and glue on paperboard
   10 x 7
   Collection of the artist
- 51. Untitled [pod and diagram], c. 1952
   Collage: engraving, pencil, and glue on paperboard
   10 x 7
   Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City

- 52. Untitled [hand holding string with ball], c. 1952
  Collage: engraving, pencil, and glue on paperboard
  10 x 7
  Collection of the artist
- 53. Untitled [with Christian symbol], c. 1952 Collage: engraving, paper, pencil, and glue on paperboard with folded paper in pocket 10 x 7 Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City
- 54. Untitled [optical device], c. 1952
   Collage: engraving, paper, and glue on paperboard
   10 x 7
   Collection of the artist
- 55. Untitled [female head under glass], c. 1952
   Collage: engraving, pencil, and glue on paperboard
   10 x 7
   Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City
- 56. Untitled [insects], c. 1952
  Collage: engravings, pencil, and glue on paperboard
  14 x 5
  Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City
- 57. Untitled [face in bottle], c. 1952
  Collage: engravings, paper and fabric, ink, and glue mounted on paperboard
  14 x 5
  Collection of the artist

- 58. Untitled [landscape reproduction], c. 1952
  Collage: printed paper and reproduction, fabric, paper on paperboard
  14 x 5
  Collection of the artist
- 59. Untitled [checkerboard], c. 1952
  Collage: paper, fabric, glue, and pencil on paper 14 x 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>
  Collection of the artist
- 60. Untitled [locomotive], c. 1952
  Collage: engravings, paint, pencil, and glue on paperboard
  7 x 10
  Collection of Susan Weil, New York City
- 61. Untitled [Arabic script], c. 1952
  Collage: engravings, printed paper, fabric, pencil, and glue on paperboard
  14 x 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>
  Collection of Susan Weil, New York City

#### SCULPTURE

62. Untitled, 1952
From the series Scatole E Feticci Personali [Box and Personal Fetishes]
Assemblage: lidded wood paint, box with wood beads on wire, dirt and winged insect 13½ x 4 x 2 (as closed)
Collection of Rachel Rosenthal, courtesy of Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

- 63. Untitled, c. 1952
  From the series Scatole E Feticci Personali [Box and Personal Fetishes]
  Assemblage: lidded wood box with dirt, nails, glass lens, and cut gelatin silver photograph 3 x 2 x 1½
  Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City
- 64. Untitled, c. 1952
  From the series Scatole E Feticci Personali [Box and Personal Fetishes]
  Assemblage: metal box with hinged lid, printed reproduction, glue, fabric, mica, and clock mechanism
  3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 1 (as closed)
  Collection of Cy Twombly, Rome
- 65. Untitled, c. 1952
  From the series Scatole E Feticci Personali [Box and Personal Fetishes]
  Assemblage: metal box with mica top and pearl suspended on thread inside
  1 x 2 x 1
  Collection of Cy Twombly, Rome
- 66. Untitled, 1952
  From the series Scatole E Feticci Personali [Box and Personal Fetishes]
  Assemblage: lidded wood box with paint, twig, and beetle
  1½ x 3 x 2½ (as closed)
  Collection of the artist

#### WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

- 67. Untitled, c. 1952
  From the series Scatole E Feticci Personali [Box and Personal Fetishes]
  Assemblage: hinged wood box with fabric, twig, beetle, and printed reproduction under glass 4½ x 3½ x 1¼
  Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City
- 68. Untitled, c. 1952
  From the series Scatole E Feticci Personali [Box and Personal Fetishes]
  Wall hanging assemblage: wood panel with metal wheel, spikes, nails, wire, metal parts, cord, and fabric ribbon
  29 x 14 x 2
  Collection of Lori and Ira Young, Malibu

#### PHOTOGRAPHS

- 69. Rome Flea Market (II), 1952 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist
- 70. Rome Flea Market (III), 1952 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist
- 71. Rome Flea Market (IV), 1952 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist
- 72. Rome Flea Market (VI), 1952 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist

- 73. Cy and Roman Steps (I, II, III, IV, V), 1952
  Five gelatin silver photographs
  15 x 15 (image) each
  Collection of the artist
- 74. *Tangier*, 1952
  Gelatin silver photograph
  15 x 15 (image)
  Collection of the artist
- 75. *Madrid Park (IV)*, 1952 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist
- 76. *Rome Wall*, 1952
  Gelatin silver photograph
  15 x 15 (image)
  Collection of the artist
- 77. Rome Relics, 1952
  Gelatin silver photograph
  15 x 15 (image)
  Collection of the artist
- 78. Cy + Bob, Venice, 1952 Gelatin silver photograph 15 x 15 (image) Collection of the artist

# IV. Spring 1953 – Winter 1953: Fulton Street Studio, New York City

#### WORKS ON PAPER

- 79. Automobile Tire Print, c. 1953

  Monoprint: ink on paper mounted on canvas 16½ x 264½ (fully extended)

  Collection of the artist
- 80. Erased de Kooning Drawing, 1953
  Traces of ink and crayon on paper, mat with label, gold leaf frame
  25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 21<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>
  Collection of the artist

#### PAINTINGS

- 81. Untitled [black painting], 1953Oil on paper on canvas22 x 28Collection of John Cage, New York City
- 82. **Untitled**, c. 1953
  Oil and newspaper on canvas
  80½ x 58
  Collection of Dr. Erich Marx, Berlin
- 83. **Untitled**, 1953
  Oil and newspaper on canvas 35% x 61%
  Private collection

- 84. Untitled, c. 1953
  Oil and newspaper on canvas
  51½ x 54¼
  Collection of Carolyn Brown and Earle Brown,
  New York
- 85. Untitled [white textured painting], c. 1953Oil on canvas10 x 8Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City
- 86. *Dirt Painting (for John Cage)*, 1953
  Dirt and mold in wood box
  15½ x 16 x ½
  Collection of the artist
- 87. **Untitled**, 1953
  Gold and silver leaf on fabric and cardboard on canvas in wood and glass frame
  10½ x 11½ x 13%
  Collection of the artist
- 88. **Untitled**, 1953
  Gold leaf on fabric, wood, newsprint, paper on cardboard in wood and glass frame 19¾ x 19¾
  Collection of M.A. Lipschultz, Boca Raton
- 89. Untitled, 1953
  Gold leaf on fabric and paper on cardboard in wood and glass frame
  8 x 8
  Collection of Lori and Ira Young, Malibu

#### WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

# 90. Red Painting, 1953

Oil, fabric, crayon, and newspaper on canvas on cardboard

143/4 x 113/4

Private collection

## 91. Red Painting, 1953

Oil, fabric, and newspaper on canvas  $70\frac{3}{4} \times 38$ 

The Eli and Edythe L. Broad Collection

#### 92. Yoicks, 1953

Oil, fabric, and newspaper on canvas 96 x 72

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

#### SCULPTURE

#### 93. Untitled (Elemental Sculpture), 1953

Wall hanging assemblage: open wood box with nail, string, and stone 235/8 x 43/8 x 23/4

Collection of Ileana Sonnabend, New York City

# 94. Untitled (Elemental Sculpture), 1953

Assemblage: with wood block, spikes, stone, and rope

5 x 17 x 3½ (block)

5½ diameter, 9 length (stone)

35¾ (rope)

Private collection

# 95. Untitled (Elemental Sculpture), 1953

Assemblage: wood box with opening and unattached stone

 $4\frac{3}{4} \times 18 \times 5\frac{3}{4} \text{ (box)}$ 

4½ diameter (stone)

Collection of Cy Twombly, Rome

## 96. Untitled (Elemental Sculpture), c. 1953

Assemblage: steel spikes, stone, and painted wood 2 x 10 x 15/8

Private collection

## 97. Music Box, c. 1953

Assemblage: wood box with nails, steel spikes, and loose stones

11 x 17½ x 9½

Collection of Jasper Johns, New York City

#### 98. **Untitled**, 1953

Assemblage: lidded wood box containing a removable cube of balsa wood and translucent fabric

71/4 x 71/8 x 7

Collection of Rachel Rosenthal, courtesy of Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

# 99. Untitled (Elemental Sculpture), 1953

Assemblage: wood block and metal spike 113/4 x 31/8 x 27/8

Collection of the artist

- 100. Untitled (Elemental Sculpture), 1953
  Assemblage: steel hinged flange, bent steel strap, bolt, and stone
  135% x 18¼ x 9½
  Collection of the artist
- 101. **Untitled** (*Elemental Sculpture*), 1953
  Assemblage: bricks, mortar, metal rods, and concrete
  14 x 8 x 7¾
  Collection of the artist

#### FACSIMILE EDITION

# 102. Shirtboards I-XXVIII, 1990

Trial proofs of a suite of twenty-eight facsimiles based on the collages made in Europe and North Africa in 1952 (see cat. nos. 40–42 & 45–59).

Collage on handmade paperboard with various lithographed and silkscreened paper, with fabric and feathers variously.

 $16\frac{1}{2} \times 8$ ,  $11\frac{3}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $14\frac{3}{4} \times 7$ ,  $21\frac{1}{4} \times 8$ ,  $15\frac{1}{4} \times 11$  (variously) n.b. Each facsimile is 150% the scale of the original.

Edition of 65 boxed sets plus artists proofs Published by Styria Studio, New York City Trial proofs lent by the artist and Styria Studio

Robert Rauschenberg joined with Adi Rischer, founder of Styria Studio, to conceive and fabricate these extraordinary facsimiles. Not since Marcel Duchamp's *Box in a Valise* of 1946 has such exacting craft been employed to undertake a facsimile edition. The publication date for the *Shirtboard* edition will be fall 1991.

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